



# THE **BLUE JAY**

Official Bulletin  
of The  
YORKTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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## OBJECTS:

To foster an active interest  
in every branch of nature study,  
and to promote the conservation  
of all wild life; also to act  
as a connecting link  
between nature lovers in

Saskatchewan

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Regular monthly meetings have been held in Yorkton since Christmas and these have been very well attended. We are greatly indebted to the city for allowing us to use the Council Chambers for our meetings. On January 18 H.S. Swallow, President, Yorkton Branch, Saskatchewan Fish and Game League, gave a most interesting talk on "Cycles and Fur-bearing Animals in Saskatchewan." He pointed out that although cycles in wildlife had been recognized since very early times and that all evidence suggested that these were closely linked up with sunspots, yet a great deal more work had to be done by observers in widely separated areas before the riddle could be solved. Records kept faithfully over a period of years by anyone interested in nature often proved, he said, of tremendous value to the scientist.

In February, C.C. Shaw showed us his beautiful kodachrome pictures taken in various corners of the province. Members were particularly interested in the views of the "badlands" in the south of the province and "close-ups" of some of the flowers which grow there, as well as some scenes in "Hidden Valley", the coulee just taken over by the Regina Natural History Society for a wildlife sanctuary. For March we arranged an archaeological night and W.J. McDonald exhibited a very large number of stone age implements which he has collected in the Yorkton area. These included beautifully fashioned arrow heads, crude scrapers and heavy stone hammers and one or two unique "finds" such as a stone plate engraved with the imprint of a hand. C.C. Shaw also showed examples of pottery excavated in Saskatchewan. Mr. McDonald has offered to place all his collection on permanent display as soon as a building can be found in which to start a Yorkton museum.

As we "go to press", we are looking forward to having Mrs. Elizabeth B. Flock give us a talk on April 10, on "Saskatchewan Wild Flowers"

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The Regina Natural History Society has acquired the right for a number of years to a coulee in the Qu'Appelle Valley near Craven, which will be operated by the society as a wildlife sanctuary. We wish the Regina Club every success in their new project and shall be keenly interested in its progress.

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Dr. D.S. Rawson, Professor of Biology, University of Saskatoon, organized an ornithological discussion group to meet every Tuesday of the current university term. We noted with interest that one evening was to be devoted to the discussion of "Saskatchewan Hawks" and were glad to be able to supply some of the Audubon Hawk Charts which we had on hand. These were the charts of western hawks which we distributed with the Blue Jay a year ago. A few copies are still available on request.

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Dick Bird, A.R.F.S., F.Z.S., has just completed a two months tour of Eastern Canada under the auspices of the Associated Canadian Clubs. Eastern newspapers gave high praise to his pictures both for their beauty and photographic skill. One member received a letter from an eastern Canadian friend in which the writer, after seeing Mr. Bird's pictures, said "I never imagined that there were such beautiful birds on the bare ugly prairie."

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A committee from the Yorkton Natural History Society consisting of Mrs. I.M. Priestly, W.J. McDonald and C.C. Shaw has been appointed to work with the members of the Yorkton Historical Society and the city council in the matter of the proposed Yorkton Museum.

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We are very much indebted to Miss Mary Lang, who kindly loaned us her father's banding records, and to James H. Lang, who gave us details regarding his father's banding activities.





MEMORIES OF A NATURALIST  
by L.T. McKim, K.C.

For well over twenty years I have been keeping a record of the different species of birds seen each year. It is very interesting to go back over my annual lists and note the regularity with which our feathered friends arrive in the Spring, the occasional very late coming of some common bird, or the fact that some years I failed to see it altogether. My records show quite a number of birds that I have observed only once or twice in this locality.

Perhaps the rarest bird that came within the range of my field glasses was the Cinnamon Teal. One evening while my wife and I were sitting in our car, admiring the beauty of a mixed flock of ducks swimming around in a slough inside the town limits, I noticed an unusual bird on the far side of the pond. Grabbing my binoculars, I saw it was about the size of a Blue-winged Teal, but had a general reddish coloration. I recognized it at once as a Cinnamon Teal Drake. The same week I read in the Chickadee Notes that one of these rare ducks had been seen in Manitoba. This bird, common in upper California, Oregon and lower British Columbia, has appeared several times in Saskatchewan but, of course, is a straggler, entirely out of its normal range.

The greatest surprise I ever received and perhaps the greatest thrill, was in 1943. A woman telephoned me that hundreds of swallows were roosting on the telephone lines back of her home, and I trotted over to have a look at them. I was standing near the garage, both doors of which were open, when I noticed a small bird flitting around inside the building, and its peculiar markings at once diverted all my interest from the swallows. It was clearly one of the sparrow family, but what amazed me was a bright yellow spot on the breast. One would naturally think that it must be a warbler, but the cone-shaped bill and general set-up of the bird eliminated that species. The pretty fellow flew from one place to another in the garage, not seeming to notice the open doors, and on several occasions perched close to me for half a minute at a time.

I had no idea what it was but sometime afterwards, with the assistance of A.G. Lawrence, Editor of "Chickadee Notes" in the Winnipeg Free Press, I identified the bird as a Dickcissel, commonly called a little Meadowlark. Taverner in "Birds of Canada" says it is very rare in this country.

I have seen Turnstones only two or three times, but once spent a most enjoyable half hour watching a pair feeding at the lake near the C.N.R. Dam here. The way they manage the stones with their stout bills is remarkable. No laborious prying but a quick flip and the stone, sometimes two or three inches in diameter, flies into the air and turns over. These birds are very handsome fellows with their striking markings of brown, black and white, and present a very pretty picture on the ground, and perhaps even more so in flight.

Among the most beautiful sights that have ever delighted my eyes were flocks of Golden Plovers. I have seen these birds only occasionally, but twice have run across a flock of at least seventy-five. They are gorgeous, and to watch them wheel and turn in flight is in itself a fine experience. Last year my wife and I ran across one of these large flocks on the edge of a slough, a short distance from a house on the outskirts of town. They allowed us to approach within a hundred feet of them, and I think we might have gone much nearer if a dog had not put them to flight.

Avocets, among the most beautiful of our wading birds, are to be found in numbers around the alkali sloughs of Alberta and Western Saskatchewan, but are rare here. My notebook records only one, a bird which I saw standing on Indian Point at Crooked Lake, about five years ago.





## MEMORIES OF A NATURALIST (continued)

A real rarity is the Red-backed Snipe, which is easily recognized by the black patch on its belly. There are very few records of this snipe in the province. I have only seen it once, when I was lucky enough to find a small flock probing the mud at the C.N.R. Lake.

The first pair of Arkansas Kingbirds appeared in Melville in 1924, and for four years running, nested behind a can on an electric light pole at the back of our yard. Mr. Mitchell, then Provincial Naturalist, told me it was the farthest north record in the province for this bird. I am quite satisfied that the same pair came back each time because I kept a sharp lookout and did not see a single other member of this species anywhere in the district. They raised a family each year, with some assistance from me, as I frequently had to pick the young birds off the lawn and place them in a tree. These Kingbirds are now quite common here, and are reported much farther north than Melville.

This, however, seems to be about the northern range of the Lark Bunting, so common in the southern part of the province. I have three records of these birds and curiously saw them twice, several years apart, on the grounds of the Miller School the last record being in 1944.

As I look over my notes, many interesting recollections crowd my memory. I am reminded of the time I identified sixteen kinds of wading birds, feeding on a mud flat near here, without moving from the stone on which I perched, and of another occasion when I saw eight kinds of waders, two of them very rare, all gathered at a tiny slough within the town limits. Only once have I seen a flock of Purple Finches, but on the 26th day of April, 1942, two girls brought me an injured male, who still enjoys my hospitality and earns his keep many times over with his melodious songs.

I am not likely to forget the time when I pushed my way through the tangled brush on a small island in a lake north of Punnichy, and found two young turkey buzzards. Although the birds were fully grown they had not discovered their power of flight, having never left the vicinity of their nest which was under a fallen log among a thick growth of trees. With the help of two friends, who were with me, we caught the birds easily and while one of their parents watched with some concern from the top of a tall, dead poplar, we set them on the branch of a tree by the lakeshore, preparatory to photographing them. One of my companions, who possessed the camera, had told me to leave mine at the cottage because he had an exceptionally good one. When we were all ready to take the priceless picture he discovered the distressing fact that he had forgotten to load the camera with film. I could have shot him then and there, and sometimes think I shall do it yet. Never again will I have an opportunity to secure such a most unusual bird photograph.

### YORKTON MIGRATION RECORDS FOR MARCH

That the arrival of the first migrant birds is governed largely by weather conditions was proved without doubt this year, when spring-like temperatures in mid-March brought an amazing array of birds back to the prairies two weeks or more ahead of their usual date of return. Not since 1938 has such an early migration occurred. Up to March 31 our Yorkton list was - HORNE LARK, Feb. 28. MARSH HAWK, MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD, ROBIN, March 18. MEADOWLARK, BREWER'S BLACKBIRD, CANADA GOOSE, MALLARD, March 19. SLATE-COLORED JUNCO, March 20. KILLDEER, RED-TAILED HAWK, AMERICAN ROUGH-LEG HAWK, March 23. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, PINTAIL, TREE SPARROW, EASTERN BLUEBIRD, March 25.

Snow and sleet storms checked further migration in the Yorkton area the last week of the month, but in Manitoba an all-time record of 32 birds had been reported up to March 28.





## BIRD NOTES

Reports of our two earliest nesting birds came in true to form. A Horned Owl's nest with one egg was found at Crescent Lake, south of Yorkton on March 6 by J. Hagel, while M.G. Street discovered a fully completed Canada Jay's nest at Nipawin on Feb. 26.

It is rather interesting to note that where the Canada Jay builds a deep thick-walled nest to protect its eggs and young, the Horned Owl usually makes use of an old hawk or crow's nest so that often only the closest brooding by the mother bird can keep the eggs from freezing during late storms. Mr. Street reports that this particular Canada Jay's nest "was in a very exposed situation in a spruce tree along by the C.P.R. Tracks only a quarter of a mile from the nearest buildings."

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Summer birds which remain on for the winter always create interest. This past season we have heard of a Flicker at Indian Head; a Meadowlark near Grenfell; a Robin at Nipawin and a Red-winged Blackbird at Yorkton. Provided an ample supply of food is available these summer "left behinds" often manage to survive surprisingly low temperatures.

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A Christmas Bird Census taken by Dick Beddoes at Daysland, Alberta, failed to reach us in time to appear in the last "Blue Jay." On Dec. 28, Mr. Beddoes got a list of 14 different species and 90 individuals. Included in his count, and not recorded by any of the Saskatchewan observers were - Red-breasted Nuthatch (5); Slate-colored Junco (4) and Flicker (2). He remarks that the Sharp-tailed Grouse is down in numbers and that, for the first time since he has been making Christmas Censuses, he did not see a single true Prairie Chicken (~~the~~ Pinnated or Square-tailed Grouse). Magpies, he states, have "scrounged" the area and Great Horned Owls have greatly increased the last two years - this increase probably being linked up with the present abundance of mice and rabbits. The Nuthatches and Juncos were regular visitors to his feeding station.

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To most of us, Black-capped Chickadees are familiar winter-time friends but when they move out to the woods and bluffs in spring, we more or less lose sight of them for the summer. Last year, Mrs. W. Roach, Okla, noticed a Chickadee carrying "huge beakfulls of fuzzy caterpillars" and, by standing perfectly still, she saw him fly down low among some trees at the bottom of her garden. There in an old stub, about a foot from the ground, she discovered the entrance hole and, with the aid of a flashlight, she was able to see the brood of young ones down inside but was not able to count them. (Note. One of Dick Bird's most delightful colour "movie shots" is of a Chickadee carrying food to its nesting hole in a tree trunk ).

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A.G. Lawrence has pointed out, in his bird column in the Winnipeg Free Press, that "a handy contrivance to examine high nests is a pocket mirror attached at an angle to a long stick (or extension curtain rod) so that the reflection of the nest's contents may be seen from below."

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A new bird was reported for the province last Fall when A.J. Matheson, Neilburg, informed Ducks Unlimited that the Tule Geese frequently stop over in migration at Little Manitou Lake. The Tule Goose is a very large variety of the common White-fronted Goose, which is often mistakenly called "Brant." The Tule Goose weighs up to nine pounds, as compared with four or five pounds of the Common White-front. It winters in the Upper Sacramento Valley of California and the discovery of its breeding grounds in the far north was an ornithological highlight of 1941. Although it had been suspected that these big geese passed in migration across western Canada, up till now no record had been obtained.



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## BIRD NOTES (continued)

From H.H. Pittman, Wauchope, we received a most unusual record of Kingbirds taking over the nests of Orioles in his garden last summer. He writes - "We generally have three pairs of Orioles near the house every year. In 1944 two pairs arrived about the usual time and stayed long enough to build their nests. Then they disappeared.

"Shortly after this I noticed a Kingbird perched beside one of the oriole nests and found that another Kingbird was actually inside the nest. There were, however, no eggs in this nest. A few days later we saw the Kingbirds at the other nest and found it contained four eggs. These were hatched in due course and I was able to get a series of pictures of the Eastern or Common Kingbird feeding its young in the nest of the Baltimore Oriole.

"I might add that I have found a Kingbird sitting on eggs in the nest of a robin from which children had taken the original robin's eggs."

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We received more letters re Hairy Woodpeckers damaging the walls of granaries. The Martinovsky Brothers, Gerald, are of the opinion that such woodpeckers are not mainly looking for grain but rather for insects hibernating in the grooves of the boards, especially as they generally attack older buildings which have not been painted. And, in this connection, they also point out that "robins, catbirds and brown thrashers may be seen eating soft plump wheat at the granary after an early spring thaw, while insects are still scarce and birds are plenty and hungry. But one could not say that they like it!"

Mrs. W. Roach, Okla, states that there was meat stored in one granary where she noted woodpeckers had opened long cracks between the boards. And M.G. Street, Nipawin, tells us "...I once noticed a Hairy Woodpecker working on the loose boards in a granary. After one or two pecks it would stop and listen carefully, so I decided to experiment. Tapping the same board with my finger tip I discovered that there was a remarkable likeness between the sound made by the few kernels of wheat so dislodged and the sound made by large black wood-ants when disturbed in a heavily infested tree."

One point no correspondent has made quite clear is whether Hairy Woodpeckers attack granaries in preference to other farm buildings of similar construction and if it is solely the Hairy Woodpecker which has this destructive habit?

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Some members have been confused with regard to the Red-headed Woodpecker about which we made enquiries last summer. The Red-headed Woodpecker has an all scarlet head and boldly marked black and white plumage. It is a common bird in parts of Ontario and occurs in the southern section of the prairie provinces. The Flicker, or Highhole, has a red PATCH on its head, as have also male Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, but the Red-headed is our only woodpecker with brilliant all-red head. It is a familiar bird in Winnipeg.

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W. Niven, Sheho, believes Mourning Doves must be highly beneficial birds to the farmer. Last August he picked up an injured Dove in his yard. Since it was badly hurt and its crop split open, he killed it and found that the crop was full of wild mustard and wild buckwheat seeds - two bad weeds.

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Concerning the marked increase of crows and magpies, Judge A.E. Bence, Battleford, writes - "When I came to Manitoba, fifty years ago, there were few crows and no magpies. The crows have unfortunately multiplied to such an extent that there are now literally thousands, where there were formerly only tens. My first observation of the Magpie was at Saskatoon around 1918. Now they are everywhere and are particularly plentiful at Meadow Lake and other places where there is bush and water."





## WILD FLOWER CONSERVATION

The Regina Natural History Society and ourselves are jointly considering ways and means to arouse a greater interest in the need for protecting native wild flowers, particularly our provincial floral emblem, the Red Lily. Several ideas have been brought forward - one Regina suggestion was, "that through the medium of the "Blue Jay" an attempt be made to find out exactly in what sections of the Province the Lilies are most prevalent. Follow this information up with letters to the nearest town weekly, or what we think might be interested organizations, asking for their full cooperation in the preservation of the lily in that locality."

This seems an excellent suggestion. If one or two towns would make show places of spots where the lily still grows in abundance, it would do much to arouse public interest generally. Other places, British Columbia for example, have made their wild flowers a matter of public pride and interest. We should aim at doing the same thing.

Meanwhile the Red Lily will be in bloom before the next issue of the "Blue Jay" appears, so we again point out that the Red Lily is a perennial bulbous plant, reproduction by seed being a very slow process taking several years. If one breaks off the whole lily stem, one has utterly destroyed both that plant and others which might have sprung from its bulb. We therefore ask members to try and spread the idea that lilies, if picked at all, must be picked carefully, leaving some leaves to replenish the bulb below. And, above all, to remember that a few flowers carefully arranged look far more beautiful than a whole mass crowded into a jar. This "goes" for all wild flowers. We still shudder when we think of a jammed-in bunch of Lady's Slippers we were shown last summer.

PLEASE LET US HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS ON THIS MATTER. IT CONCERNS US ALL.

## SASKATCHEWAN MAPLE SUGAR

Have any members ever made maple sugar from native maple trees? It can be done. Last year one Yorkton citizen tapped an old maple tree at the bottom of his yard and succeeded in getting a small quantity of sugar to the extreme surprise of his sceptical family!

And in a recent article, "First Breath of Spring", in the Regina Leader-Post, R.C. Mackenzie wrote - Along the banks of the Carrot River in the northeastern part of the province, many big old maple trees are tapped annually, and each produces a quantity of sugar sap which is collected and later reduced to boiling to yeild a fairly good grade of sugar. These are Manitoba maples (*Acer negundo*), the only maple growing naturally in Saskatchewan. This is the same tree that provided the earliest settlers in Manitoba with most of their syrup and sugar."

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Frogs were first heard piping at Yorkton March 22 - which is another unusually early first date recorded for this 1945 season. Few people have seen frogs awakening from their winter hibernation but one spring Mrs. Marion Nixon disturbed an old hot bed, and huddled there at the junction of soil and manure were about twenty small Swamp Tree Frogs. The ground was still partly frozen and some of them were still encased in icy soil - but just as soon as a clod became broken to expose a leg, that leg would start wiggling, flexing rhythmically and slowly, and soon the owner would squirm his whole body free."

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During the Christmas holidays a lump of domestic ice was brought to us by Jack Shave, Yorkton, with what appeared to be a large beetle frozen in the centre. The insect, however, proved to be a Giant Water Bug. It was in an excellent state of preservation and showed clearly the sharp downward-pointing beak with which these creatures stab their victims! Water Bugs are air-breathers and hibernate in mud or pond banks so it seems likely that this particular specimen had been caught by a sudden freeze-up - which is exactly what happened last Fall.





An early Richardson's Ground Squirrel - otherwise a "gopher", was seen at Yorkton March 18, but Miss E.K. Jones writes that they were out at Raymore March 8.

C. Fehrenbach, Saltcoats, a new member of our society, has lived in Saskatchewan 56 years and has always been interested in its wildlife. One point which has long perplexed him is what becomes of skunks which are shot and allowed to lie around. After a few days, he has always noted that the carcass completely disappears. It has been suggested that owls carry them away, but since a skunk is so much heavier than an owl this does not seem very probable. However, he once had an experience which seems to throw some light on this problem. A few years ago he shot a skunk about six feet from a small culvert. The body lay around for some days and then it too disappeared leaving only a slight depression in the grass where it had lain. But near the opening of the culvert Mr. Fehrenbach noticed that the soil had been disturbed as if some animal had been scratching there, so he looked inside, and there was another skunk, "rolling, tossing and throwing his dead friend around." The next day when Mr. Fehrenbach returned to the spot there was "no sight or sound of either animal dead or alive." "Has anyone," he asks, "ever come across a similar occurrence?"

With regard to owls eating skunks, it seems to be a proven point that Great Horned Owls do kill and devour skunks - A.C. Bent states in "Life Histories of North American Birds", "The nest of the Great Horned Owl often smells strongly of skunk, and the birds themselves often retain this pungent odor long after they have been made into museum specimens." - But just how the Horned Owl consumes a skunk we have no idea; possibly they return time and time again to the kill - unless or course, another skunk with cannibalistic tendencies comes along!

A Jumping Mouse captured by Mrs. E.W. Cates, McLean, last Fall was identified by Dr. R.M. Anderson of the National Museum, Ottawa, as a Saskatchewan Jumping Mouse, a variety more common in the western part of the province. Tawny yellow in color, jumping mice can easily be identified by the long tail, short front legs and greatly elongated hind legs. Fairly commonly distributed, they seem to prefer grassy meadows and often reveal themselves by leaping from cover as an intruder approaches, hence their popular name of "Kangaroo Mice." Unlike most mice they hibernate during the winter months - as a matter of fact, Jumping Mice are only distantly related to true mice and are classified in a small family by themselves.

We had reports of porcupines being seen last year at Gerald, Grenfell, the Qu'Appelle Valley, Nipawin and Kindersley. W.H. Howes thinks that the two which he saw at Kindersley were the Black-haired Porcupine, while a lighter form seems to have been observed at Gerald. We should be glad to get specimens of porcupine spines at any time.

Mule Deer, often called "Jumping Deer", are increasing in the eastern part of the province. They have been reported as becoming more numerous in the Qu'Appelle, at Gerald, and east of Saltcoats. They may be coming in from Manitoba.

A much greater interest in native wildlife has been evident of late. The provincial legislature indulged in a spirited discussion over the merits and demerits of the coyote, which animal was strongly defended by Lieut. Niles Buchanan (C.C.F. Notukeu-Willowbunch). And, according to the Regina Leader-Post, the annual meeting of the Association of Rural Municipalities "took time out from the discussion of weighty problems to delve into a little natural history, as they argued the good and bad points of weasel and badger." All of which is to the good, say we.

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## SASKATCHEWAN BIRD BANDERS.

3. George H. Lang, INDIAN HEAD. Beginning his banding activities in 1923, the late George H. Lang of Indian Head banded a grand total of 6208 birds in Saskatchewan. Robins top his list with 1662 individuals, followed by Black-crowned Night Heron (859); House Wren (498); Bronzed Grackle (461); Yellow-shafted Flicker (458); Common Tern (447); Slate-colored Junco (306); Brewer Blackbird (184); Mourning Dove (168); Barn Swallow (165); Bank Swallow (127); Yellow Warbler (106); Burrowing Owl (85) and Crow (83).

The Black-crowned Night Herons were banded at a colony at Dry Lake, which is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles S.E. of Strawberry Lake, south of Indian Head. Crows were very numerous in this district, and in some years they destroyed nearly all of the herons' eggs. The Common Terns were banded as young on an island in the middle of Dry Lake. The terns were apparently flourishing in 1932, in which year Mr. Lang banded 339 of this species.

Unusual birds banded by Mr. Lang include Grinnell Water-thrush (1); Hudsonian Chickadee (1); Sora Rail (1); Sharp-shinned Hawk (18); Pelican (4); Say's Phoebe (7); Bonaparte's Gull (1); Goshawk (4) and Golden Eagle (1).

Four adult Pelicans were washed up on the shores of Lake Katepwa in a terrific windstorm on July 23, 1930. Mr. Lang's son, Bob (now Sgt. Robt. Lang, Canadian Army Overseas), caught the Pelicans and banded them.

On Oct. 20, 1938, Mr. Lang, while duck shooting at Vanguard, Sask., was hiding below the bank of the river. A large Golden Eagle dived at a rabbit sitting on the bank, missed the rabbit and plunged into the water. Mr. Lang quickly rushed into the water and caught the Eagle. When it dried out, he placed a band on it and let it go.

At first, nearly all the birds were banded as nestlings. Later, simple box traps were used, to catch adult birds. Up until 1933, Mr. Lang entered all his returns in his banding record books, but the list of returns for 1933 on is not included with the rest of his records. However, many interesting returns are listed for the first ten years, and these are a valuable addition to our knowledge of Saskatchewan avifauna.

Probably, of all the species he has banded, the return records from the Night Herons are the most important. One of these birds banded as a nestling on June 18/24 was found hanging from an electric light pole near Borger, Texas, on May 9/33, 8 years and 11 months later. Four other herons travelled to Texas, while others went to North Dakota, Minnesota, Arkansas, Kansas, Illinois and Florida. One caught on a fishing hook in Texas was nearly five years old, while another found dead at Carman, Illinois, was 7 years and 3 months old.

Bronzed Grackles went to Arkansas and Minnesota, while another grackle caught in Louisiana was nearly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years old. Robins were heard from as far away as Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. A Common Tern, banded July 19/32, was caught at Ottertail County, Minnesota, four years later. Two Brewer Blackbirds reached Texas, one of them nearly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years after being banded.

A Great Horned Owl, generally supposed to remain in the same locality, was found dead at Clavet, Sask., 155 miles from where it was banded, two years and two months later. Another bird of this species was shot north of Qu'Appelle, Sask. over 7 years after it was banded.

Mr. Lang had abundant proof that some birds return to exactly the same place year after year. He also had a number of records of birds, banded as fledglings, which came back to live somewhere within a fifty mile radius of Indian Head. A Bronzed Grackle was killed at Sintaluta, nearly 3 years after being banded. A Crow was shot at nearby Katepwe, at the age of eight years. A Robin was found dead at Regina Beach, nearly four years later, while another was caught at Killalee, five years later. A Flicker was caught at Cupar, nearly two years after being banded.

Mr. Lang was secretary of the Experimental Farm at Indian Head until 1931, when he retired. In Sept., 1939, Mr. Lang moved to Cawston, B.C. When he died on Sept. 12, 1941, at the age of 68 years, Saskatchewan lost one of its keenest naturalists, and Nature lost one of its best friends.





## MAN, THE NATURE WASTER

The following extract from a letter written by J.D. Ritchie, Wallwort, needs no comment - "You cannot print too many articles on conservation in the "Blue Jay", for there is still far too great a wastage of wildlife. One day, a few years ago, I heard a shot just around the bend in the road from my garden. A few minutes later along came a fellow with a dead Pileated Woodpecker dangling from one hand and a .22 rifle in the other - you know, one of those big red-crested woodpeckers about the size of a crow which stay in the tall timber. Right away I was up in the air. "What did you shoot that bird for?" I asked. He hummed and hawed and finally said, "W-wh-why it was right close there on the tree trunk and a good mark so I shot him." Now what can be done about a thing like that? He didn't want it, he went away and left it lying, didn't even take a feather from it. What is the matter with such people? They are carrying a .22 rifle; they see some beautiful creature enjoying life and up goes the cursed shooting iron and down falls one of God's most wonderful creations. And then what have they got, nothing but a piece of blood-soaked carrion. There can be no enjoyment in this.

"I knew this particular woodpecker; he had a nest in a dead poplar stub and for days the female bird called and called for him and he didn't come. So she had to do the work of supplying food for a brood of hungry nestlings entirely alone, and all because her mate was "a good mark" for a dirty killer."

### DO YOU KNOW?

No. 4. The Starling. The Starling, a newcomer in western Canada, was introduced into New York from Europe some 50 years ago, in the hope that it would prove a valuable check on insect pests. But whatever its value along this line, the Starling soon demonstrated the danger of introducing an alien species into a new environment. It multiplied and spread and has proved a very doubtful blessing to farmer and city dweller alike. It reached Manitoba in 1930, coming up from Minnesota and since then has spread west across the prairies to Alberta.

It is rather a puzzling bird to identify since it has two plumage phases in the year. In spring and early summer it may be described as a glossy, short-tailed black bird with a bright yellow bill. But after the Fall molt it appears as a heavily spotted or speckled bird with a dark bill. This speckling is due to light tips on the body feathers. With the coming of spring, most of these light tips wear off to expose fully the shining iridescent plumage underneath.

The Starling has a cheerful whistle and a wide variety of notes and calls. It is a great mimic of other birds. When on the ground in search of grubs and insects it walks rather rapidly, zigzag fashion. In flight it often sails for a considerable distance on set wings.

One can hardly welcome the starling to any locality. In spite of certain engaging ways, they are dirty, untidy birds and a serious complaint against them is that they usurp the nesting holes of more desirable **native** birds such as the bluebirds and purple martins. In winter too, they gather into flocks, and if such flocks are of any size, they can quickly destroy any grove of trees which they adopt as a roosting place. All in all we could have done quite well without the starling.

### BOOKS.

Native Trees of Canada. A bulletin first published by the Forestry Service in 1917, reprinted several times since and revised in 1933. 209 pages, well illustrated, and gives distribution maps for each species. Price, 50 cents. Write King's Printer, Ottawa.

Birds of Canada, by F.A. Taverner. Musson & Co. \$3.50. May be obtained through any book store. We would once again like to remind members that this is the one book that everyone interested in birds should possess.





## INFORMATION PLEASE

We want to hear of localities where the Red Lily still grows in comparative abundance - also of places where it has become increasingly scarce within recent years.

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How far north has the Brown Thrasher been noted? We have been told that it has become quite common in the High Hill district south of Kelvington. A few years ago, a well-known birdman was surprised to learn that the Brown Thrasher was a familiar bird around Yorkton as he had been under the impression that the Qu'Appelle Valley, more or less, marked the northern limit of this outstanding songster.

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We should like any information regarding the present status of the true Prairie Chicken - the Pinnated or Square-tailed Grouse. In eight years we have only had two records for Yorkton. This is the bird whose "booming" was once so often heard across the prairies in spring when the cock birds performed their ritualistic dance on traditional dancing grounds. It should be noted that the Sharp-tailed Grouse, commonly (and mistakenly) called the "prairie chicken", also performs a similar dance, but only gives utterance of a sort of clucking, which cannot be heard for any great distance. As contrasted with the Sharp-tail, the Pinnated Grouse is a darker bird with barring on the breast, where the Sharp-tail has V-shaped markings. In a letter received recently, W. Niven, Sheho, writes "It would be interesting to hear if the Pinnated Grouse are still common anywhere in Eastern Saskatchewan; I always considered them to be a more handsome game bird than the Sharp-tail."

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Apparently the first appearance of bats is something which escapes most observers. The only reply to our request for "first seen" dates came from J.D. Ritchie, Wallwort, who, in a fourteen year period from 1931 to 1944, has three early records for bats - 1931, May 14; 1932, May 10; 1934, May 7. Several members stated that bats seemed scarce last year. Please send in any notes concerning these little brown mammals.

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Reports of Burrowing Owls found "north of the main C.P.R. line" were received from Grenfell, Gerald, Bredenbury, Saltcoats, Yorkton, Melville, Kindersley, Nipawin, Saskatoon and North Battleford. There seems a general impression that Burrowing Owls have spread northwards in very recent years, so it is most interesting to hear from the Martinovsky Brothers, Gerald, that "...when we homesteaded in the early nineties five miles S.W. of where the town of Gerald is today, Burrowing Owls were common on the prairie at that time."

W.H. Howes, Kindersley, comments "Burrowing Owls are quite common around home where the land is still original prairie. I have never seen them where fields are cultivated." - It is hardly necessary to mention that Burrowing Owls are most beneficial birds and should never be exterminated. They are surprisingly tame and lend themselves to excellent and amusing photographs particularly when the young ones first gather outside their burrow.

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With regard to localities where Bluebirds are found nesting - John Hubbard, Jr., Grenfell, writes that he has known them as a nesting species in the Grenfell district for many years "but, with the bush getting smaller and thinner all the time, there are not now as many suitable trees for them to nest in." And Judge A.E. Bence, Battleford, tells us "Mountain Bluebirds used to be common at Meota and Maymont in the 1920's but have rarely been seen in the past decade. English Sparrows, which are in great numbers, have I believe driven them away."

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last  
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